

Whittier homeowner wins \$10,000 energy makeover

By Erick Galindo, Staff Writer
Posted: 05/12/2011 11:28:18 PM PDT

WHITTIER - Stephen Kienzle's Whittier home leaks about 50 percent of its heated and cooled air through unsealed and un-insulated openings.

"Our house has chilly drafts in the winter and sweltering heat in the summer," he said. But that's all about to change.

Kienzle was selected for a free home energy makeover through the Energy Upgrade California program. The makeover, sponsored by Chino-based So Cal Remodeling, is valued at \$10,000 and will result in energy savings of at least 20 percent.

"Saving money is a top priority for almost every American family, but this makeover will do so much more," he said. "This will give my family a better quality of comfort and a more pleasing home environment."

A total of six Los Angeles County winners were selected and the awards were presented Thursday at an Energy Upgrade press event in Studio City at a "toward net zero" energy house, a prototype for "greening" existing homes.

County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky was on hand to announce the winners of the Home Energy Makeover Contest. Four other homeowners received free home energy makeover packages worth up to \$10,000. Another, Albert Gerardo, won the grand prize home energy makeover, worth up to \$50,000.

"We're very excited because we now have the opportunity to make our home more energy efficient," said Gerardo, whose family has lived in a 1953, single-story home in San Fernando for 14 years.

The \$50,000 makeover will

essentially make the Gerardo household efficient enough to be near net zero, meaning the Gerardos will use almost no energy at all.

Energy Upgrade was launched in L.A. County early this year. The program provides homeowners who make energy-saving home improvements with rebates and incentives of up to \$4,500.

At Thursday's event, Energy Upgrade showcased demonstrations of energy efficient products and procedures. Attendees were also given a tour of a net-zero home prototype.

Kienzle praised the program for fostering improvements that not only reduce the county's carbon footprint, but also result in ongoing savings on monthly utility bills for homeowners. Kienzle and his wife Colleen live in a 1956, one-story, ranch-style house on Calmosa Avenue in Whittier. They have three sons, age 12 to 17, who attend East Whittier

Middle School and La Serna High School, respectively. All three have asthma, making indoor air quality a bigger concern.

"The better air quality will help my sons' asthma," he said. "And, we also have the satisfaction of reducing our carbon footprint."

Kienzle said he was shocked to find out how much energy he was losing at his home. "I knew my utility bills were higher than the neighbors and that we were probably losing energy - but not that much," he said.

A five-hour audit revealed a variety of issues, such as older, single-pane windows and a lack of floor and attic insulation. Kienzle also had an oversized and unsafe gas furnace and un-insulated hot water pipes.

According to Kienzle, when all the remodeling is done Energy Upgrade will throw a party to showcase the home to the neighborhood. Kienzle said he is going to show off his reduced electricity bill.

"But even if there is no difference in my monthly bill, I'd be happy with a 40 percent increase in comfort," he said.

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The Kienzle's Whittier home has been selected for an energy makeover as part of Energy Upgrade California in Los Angeles County. Stephen and Colleen Kienzle are pictured with their children from left: Keegan, Kaden and Konner at their Calmosa Avenue home May 12, 2011. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Leo Jarzomb)